

**Testimony of Blair Bertaccini**

**Labor and Public Employees Committee**

**HB 6934: AAC Wages Paid to Individuals Providing Food, Building, Property or Equipment Services to Municipalities**

**March 3, 2015**

Good afternoon, Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Blair Bertaccini. I am a recently retired Wage Enforcement Agent with the State of Connecticut Department of Labor.

Thank you for raising HB 6934: An Act Concerning Wages Paid to Individuals Providing Food, Building, Property or Equipment Services to Municipalities. I urge your support this important legislation to make sure we end the race to the bottom of service employee wages.

On behalf of the State, I enforced the state law requiring service contractors to pay the standard wage rate. Under 31-57f, corporations that perform property maintenance or provide food service under contract with the state must pay their employees the standard wage rate as set by the Department of Labor. This helps make sure that the state is not undercutting the marketplace on the side of either employees or employers.

This standard should be extended to our cities, towns and Boards of Education for the same reason. When one of our municipalities looks to purchase a service, it can have an effect on pricing of that service in a local economy – either driving wages up or driving wages down. Requiring that companies who provide these services under contract with a municipal agent pay their employees the standard rate takes the government buying power out of equation.

We need more family supporting jobs in this state, not fewer. At time when some studies have concluded that a wage of slightly over \$19.00 per hour is a living wage allowing a family a modest standard of living passing this act will bring us closer to insuring better jobs for our state. If a community is going to hire a private company to perform a service, the company should not be allowed to profit by cutting the wages and benefits of dedicated local employees. This bill ensures a level playing field among employers. Those employers that find efficiencies through innovation will rise to the top, and those that were artificially finding profits by taking from the front-line workers will be exposed.

Much like the state's standard wage law already is, this bill will help our communities, our business climate, and our workforce.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.